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C O N F I D E N T I A L RIYADH 001529

SIPDIS

C O R R E C T E D COPY ///ADDING TITLE TO SUBJECT LINE///

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/18/2017
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [SA](#)
SUBJECT: SAUDI ARABIA SUPPORTS PRESIDENT BUSH'S INITIATIVE, CALLING
FOR THE US TO BE FAIR AND JUST

REF: RIYADH 1454

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Michael Gfoeller
for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (U) The Saudi Press Agency (SPA) issued an official statement on July 17 welcoming President Bush's initiative, announced on July 16, to resolve the Israeli/Palestinian crisis. The statement specifically supported the President's call to "end occupation, establish an independent and contiguous viable Palestinian state, and the need for peace" to include agreement on the status of Jerusalem and on the right of refugees to return. The statement recognized that the President's initiative was in line with the Arab Peace Initiative, which was unanimously supported by the Arab League states during their March 2007 summit in Riyadh.

¶2. (U) In press statements, SAG officials also expressed hope that the proposed international peace conference would "address the core issues of the struggle, guarantee a fair balance of commitments and responsibilities, and achieve the dismantlement of settlements, not just an end to future settlement activities." The SPA statement further expressed concern that past efforts have failed essentially because they have not kept these three principles in mind, stating that a partial solution would be made at the expense of a final solution. The statement also urged Palestinians to unify and abide by the joint Arab approach, supporting recent Arab League and Gulf Security Council (GCC) summit resolutions.

¶3. (C) Assistant Minister of Interior Prince Muhammad bin Nayif expressed concern about the "fairness" of the future peace conference during a July 17 meeting with EconCouns. Prince Muhammad bin Nayif stated that "People want America to be fair, just. That's all." His statement clearly reflected the hope that the USG would consider the Arab perspective, not just the Israeli view, as is often perceived by the Saudis.

¶4. (C) Arabic-language media stressed that solving the Palestinian issue is the key to solving the problems of the Middle East. However, most newspapers, online sources, and Saudi interlocutors expressed doubt about the ability of the USG to address successfully the key issues of Jerusalem and refugees. Many commented that the USG will be unable or unwilling to pressure Israel to compromise on these critical areas. Additionally, several individuals pondered the reasons behind the President's announcement, which ranged from anticipated fallout from the possible pullout of U.S. troops from Iraq to support for pro-American Arab leaders, such as Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah.

¶5. (C) COMMENT: SAG support for the President's initiative demonstrates once again the Saudis' preference for utilizing

a multi-lateral approach to resolve regional crises (reftel).

Although there is some chattering amongst the population regarding the USG's motives, SAG itself clearly supports the President's initiative. END COMMENT.

GFOELLER